

## MACAULAY'S METHOD

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energy of the writer, and carries the reader on from page to page. This was his object. The methods of Gibbon and Macaulay have often been contrasted. Gibbon labours to be emphatic by means of condensation and brevity, by the use of suggestive epithets, or short pregnant clauses. 'He conveys incidentally/ says one of his critics, ' by a passing adjective, information that Macaulay would have set forth in a special sentence/ Macaulay emphasises a point by expansion into a paragraph instead of condensation into a line or word. That they appealed to different audiences explains the difference in their methods. Gibbon wrote for men of letters who would appreciate his verbal felicities and his nice choice of words. Macaulay aimed at interesting everybody who could read. He assumed the tone of an orator addressing a great mixed audience, and the devices which he employed to excite and retain their attention were the devices of the orator rather than the writer—rhetorical in the strict sense of the word, rather than literary.

The style of Macaulay's History is the style of his speeches. Whatever subject he is treating in his History the orator is always appearing behind the historian, or rather the two are one: in reading we are continually reminded that his speeches never failed to fill the

benches of  
the House of Commons with crowded  
listeners. Taine in  
his admirable study of Macaulay brings this  
out very  
clearly.<sup>1</sup> There is not an idea or a phrase in his  
writings,  
says Taine, in which the gifts and the  
instincts of the  
orator do not appear. Perhaps his  
incomparable lucidity  
was due to the habit of public speaking. A  
man who  
wants to convince a public assembly has to  
address himself  
to every member of it; to keep the attention  
of men who

<sup>1</sup> Histoire de la littérature anglaise,  
vol. v.